

Isle of Man Marks Two Historic Events of 1840

On February 17 the Isle of Man Post Office celebrated the 175th anniversary of the Penny Black as well as the birth of Edward Stanley Gibbons.



Postage rates on the Isle of Man and the rest of the British Isles had risen to a very high level by 1830 and as a result a campaign to reform these was led by Roland Hill with the main aim of lowering the rate to one penny per half ounce. This and a method to signify if a letter had been prepaid was developed by William Mulready.



On December 5, 1839 the rate was reduced to four pence. This was a success and the penny rate was introduced on January 10, 1840. At first the postage paid or due was written in ink on the letter by the postmaster and then on May 6, 1840 the famous Penny Black was born, followed by the Twopenny Blue on May 8, 1840.

To prevent forgery the stamps were printed by the recess method,



paper was specifically made with a small watermark on each stamp, a machine was used to make intricate background patterns, and unique corner letters were designed, with each stamp on the printing plate of 240 stamps having a different combination of corner letters. The 1840 stamps were found to be easily cleaned of the red cancellation and reused and this prompted an 1841 color change

to red for the Penny stamp.

The recent six-stamp Isle of Man issue includes depictions of the Penny Black, the Penny Red, the Twopenny Blue, William Mulready and Roland Hill. A sixth stamp features a portrait of Edward Stanley Gibbons, who coincidentally was born on June 21, 1840. Gibbons' interest in stamps led to his starting the Stanley Gibbons business in 1856 when employed as an assistant in his father's pharmacy shop in Plymouth, where he set up a counter selling stamps. The company he founded now is the world's oldest rare stamp merchant.



Dean Shepherd, Editor of *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* said: "It was fitting that ...this very special issue....also marks the 125th Anniversary of *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* magazine—which I am delighted to see depicted on the £1.20 value."

For information on this and other Isle of Man new issues and a link to the Isle of Man postal administration website, please go to:

<https://www.iompost.com/stamps-coins/>.